

INTERNAL COMMUNICATION STRATEGY - Draft: 11/12/03**Prepared by: Ted Linnert, Community Involvement Coordinator x6119**

Multiple Program Coordination for Rico Cleanup Options

Background

"Rico," the Spanish word for "rich," describes both the scenery and history of this small Colorado mountain town. Fur trappers were the first settlers in the Dolores River valley, but when gold was discovered in 1866 this sleepy settlement became a hotbed of activity. The Ute Indian tribe tried to keep the miners at bay until 1878 when the rush began with the signing of an agreement surrendering their land claims in the San Juan Mountains.

The establishment of the Pioneer Mining District in 1876 and the discovery of oxidized silver in 1876 led to the incorporation of Rico as saloons, brothels, a general mercantile, and the Pioneer Hotel and Restaurant sprung up on the newly platted streets. The Enterprise Lode was struck in 1887 and the Rio Grande Southern Railroad included a stop in Rico on its route from Dolores to Ridgway.

Rico reached its apex in 1892 with a population of 5,000, 23 saloons, three blocks of red-light district, two churches and newspapers, a theater, boarding houses, and the Rico State Bank. Rico became the county seat with offices located in the first Dolores County Courthouse, which is now on the National Register of Historic Places. Hard times hit Rico in 1893 during the first silver panic when most businesses closed. By 1900, only 811 people still called Rico home.

In 1926, the Rico Company began to revitalize the area's mining industry and in 1937 the Rico Argentine Mining Company constructed a new mill. A sulfuric acid plant improved the local economy from 1953 until 1965 when the mining industry shifted its focus to extracting lead and zinc ores until 1971.

Today Rico has 200 permanent residents and is enjoying a renaissance. Many residents commute to nearby Telluride or work from their homes. Ambitious plans for development are predicated on the cleanup of the legacy of the mining industry. Early indications are that soils in and around town are contaminated with lead, zinc, arsenic, and mercury. Ground water awaits testing. The Dolores River (and the McPhee and Naraguinnep reservoirs it fills) have tested positive for mercury in sediments and fish tissue. The mines in the Rico area have been determined to be the source of these pollutants.

This strategy is designed generally to address communicating the cleanup options available to the citizens of Rico and specifically to deal with the reaction to EPA's recent soil sampling results.

Key Contacts:**Media Spokesperson(s):**

Max Dodson

Function:

Assist. Regional Administrator

Work Phone:

303-312-6598

Contacts**EPA - Region 8:**

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Luke Chavez	Superfund Project Manager	303-312-6512
Dale Vodehnal	Environmental Protection Mgr.	303-312-6761
Sheldon Muller	Enforcement Attorney	303-312-6916
Debra Ehlert	Sr. Strategic Planner	303-312-6108
Ted Linnert, 8OC	Comm. Involve. Coord.	303-312-6119

State of Colorado (CDPHE):

Mark Walker	Voluntary Cleanup Project Manager	303-692-3449
Susan Robinette	Water Quality Scientist	303-692-3510
Marion Galant, CDPHE	Dr., Comm. Involvement	303-692-3304

Goals:

1. To affirm EPA's commitment to protecting public health and the environment and its support for open and meaningful community involvement in environmental decision-making
2. To acknowledge and validate the Voluntary Cleanup Program already in place.
3. To share data already collected, including soil sampling results from 10/03.
4. To let the citizens of Rico know what their cleanup options are.

Messages:

1. There are many options available to the citizens of Rico including those available under the Clean Water Act and CERCLA.
2. The implementation of these options depends on a lot of factors, one of which is the input from the residents of Rico.
3. EPA has no set agenda in Rico - no specific decisions have been made.

ACTIVITIES

Activity	Person(s) Responsible	When?	Comments	Results
Identify Spokesperson(s)	Max, Carol, Ted, Mark, <i>et al</i> (see Key Contacts list)	Completed		Max is Spokesperson
Draft Comm. Strat.	Ted (with input from list)	In progress		
Prepare for Public Meeting	Ted, Carol, <i>et al</i>	By 8/27/03	Includes "Cleanup Options" table	Completed
Conduct Public Meeting	Ted, Carol, Dave, Mark, Susan	8/27/03	Town Hall, 7pm, Rico	Completed in stellar fashion
San Juan Focus Area Tour	The Touring Team	9/-9/5/03	Completed	
EPA Soil Sampling	Contractor (TetraTec)	October 2003	To be completed before ground freezes.	This phase completed
Reaction to 11/4/03 <u>Post</u> article	Max to phone Town Attorney & Manager	In progress		
Analyze Soil Sample results	Luke, Carol,	In progress		

Present Sample Data & Results to citizens .	Ted, Luke, Carol, <i>et al</i>	???	Need to come up with a plan.	

QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

1. What are the contaminants we need to be concerned about?

Lead, arsenic, cadmium, mercury, and zinc.

2. What are the effects of these contaminants on our health?

(See EPA and ATSDR flyers and fact sheets?)

3. What are we getting into? How disruptive will the cleanup be?

This depends on the cleanup option(s) chosen.

4. How long will it take?

5. Is my kid in danger now?

Keep their hands clean. We'll know more after soil sampling is completed.

6. How will my property values be affected?

7. What is the next step?

8. Why does the Town have to pay?

As long as the Town is not named on the permit, it should not have to pay any cleanup costs.

9. Who is your contact in Dolores County?

Dolores County does not seem to have an environmental contact.

10. Why shouldn't the people/businesses that caused the problem pay for the cleanup?

They should.

11. What is the risk of migration of contaminants from County Maintenance shed?

There is not much migration from that site, however, it should be cleaned up.

12. How well would EPA (Superfund) and State Brownfields work together?

We would work in tandem, especially in redevelopment and revitalization.

13. How much money would be available under Superfund?

There is \$289K already in escrow, the rest would be paid for by PRP's or the taxpayer.

14. Is the \$290K guaranteed to come back to Rico?

Yes.

15. What were the discharge violations?

16. Have we tested fish?

Yes, mercury was found.

17. How does the MOA between the State and EPA work?

We meet, avoid duplication of effort, coordinate via meetings, etc.

18. Are the local powerplants to blame for mercury in McPhee?

It has been determined that the powerplants are responsible for about 10% of the contamination in the reservoir.

19. Doesn't congress always try to reinstate the Superfund tax?

Yes.

20. Hasn't Rico been considered before to become a Superfund Site?

No, Site Assessments have been done but more data is needed.

21. The Rico Argentine Mill has become a dump - who should clean it up?

The Mill is part of the Webster estate and the owner should clean it up.

22. If Superfund route is taken, what is to prevent PRP's and EPA from litigating for years?

EPA's "Unilateral Administrative Orders" (UAOs) are executed quickly.

23. Are the Consent Decrees in effect now?

Yes.

24. What sort of followup is there for remediated areas?

There are frequent monitoring inspections, five year reviews and the threat of repealing the "No Further Action" decision.

25. What happens if the EPA is eliminated by the Bush administration?

26. What percentage of the pollution in the Dolores River is from the St. Louis Tunnel?

It is estimated that the Tunnel is responsible for up to 90% of the pollution in the Dolores River.

27. Is there any danger to users of the hot springs near the settling ponds?

Unlikely - don't drink the water and bathe afterwards.

28. If you sample roads in town for Pb and you find high levels, would the Town be liable for their cleanup?

29. To clean up the lead in the soils, must the Town become a Superfund Site and bear the stigma that entails?

No, there are other options (see Ted's chart).

30. Did the EPA recover enough money from the Webster estate? Why didn't you go for more?

31. Why is ARCO pushing the Voluntary Cleanup approach? Do they think they will spend less money going this route?

ARCO would prefer not to have the EPA involved because EPA has the power to enforce cleanup actions requiring more funds.

32. Why does EPA prefer an order under section 106 of CERCLA?

Because it is enforceable.